

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>17</sup>Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," in *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1963), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>19</sup>Harry Rand, *Arshile Gorky: The Implications of Symbols* (Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheid, Osmun and Co., 1980), p. 29.

## Critique

"Between Shadow and Rock . . ." discusses how this ethnic literature reflects the place of women in Armenian American society. Few works are published by Armenian women. When women appear in Armenian novels of fathers and sons, they are often foils or narrowly portrayed in terms of stereotypes (e.g. loving mother, dutiful wife). Various themes recur in this ethnic genre: political upheaval and violence, the loss of homeland and the stress of immigration to the United States. Such themes call attention to the subordinate position of Armenian American women and their limited scope in society. Male characters expect women to offer psychological support and to suffer silently, to demonstrate qualities which represent a lost homeland such as endurance and fertility and to reject pressure in the U.S. to modify traditional behavior.

What is the relationship between ethnic identity and a woman's sense of who she is? Bedrosian shows that the two types of group awareness, attention to culture and homeland and a woman's sense of gender, do not necessarily complement each other. Male figures in Armenian American literature often think about being oppressed and alienated because they are members of a unique cultural group. However, the treatment they receive does not appear to make them more conscious of the subordinate position of women. Not surprisingly, the essay suggests that some female characters consider their ethnic legacy a burden which prevents them from being who they choose.

Rigid roles, which limit the choice of work, education and female-male behavior, can make ethnic women prisoners of their culture.

Conflict exists between ethnic identity and gender identity in many cultural groups. Conflict weakens the ability of people to join together and take action on issues which affect unique cultural groups and women. Do women from different ethnic groups in the U.S. share ideas about being women and being part of a special culture as well? Cross-cultural comparative studies of how women in ethnic literature deal with their sex and culture could clarify such a question. Are women less subordinate to men in some types of ethnic literature than in others? Is there a common set of assumptions about women in different ethnic works which foster the notion of a second sex? One problem with such literary enquiry is that Armenian women writers are few. Female persona can be foils or symbols and can say less about women than about a male writer's perception of women.

"Between Shadow and Rock..." suggests that women in Armenian American literature who are aware of ethnicity and gender have a multiple sense of consciousness. They see experience through at least two frames of reference and thus are able to be both female and ethnic. Can one sort of consciousness be layered over another so that one aspect of a woman's sensibility, say gender, takes precedence over but works in concert with ethnicity? Or do women have a simultaneous sense of ethnicity and gender which is coordinated in terms of certain types of events, pressures, and relationships?

Joe Rodriguez  
San Diego State University